I value <INSERT AFF VALUE>, which is no different from any normative concept in that it guides action. It tells us what is right and what is wrong. The only objective basis for normative claims is one that can bind all agents universally because subjective interpretations of justice carry no force when applied between different agents and thus cannot be a true guide for action. What logically follows is that the only method to derive moral claims is through constitutive elements of agency, which are necessary and intrinsically normative parts of being an agent.

No agent can coherently reject the formal principles of reason because if you act, you necessarily act for reasons, no matter how good or bad those reasons are. We are paralyzed without first endorsing our desires, which is the method through which we generate reasons for action.

Moreover, the only way we can escape infinite regress is through a priori reason because we can keep asking “Why?” for why we should allow experiences of physical facts to guide and bind us, but we just reinforce the authority of reasons when we ask why act for reason. Thus, the only truly normative concepts are pure principles of reason.

The constitutive principle of reasoning is that our judgments seek to be consistent with other judgments. Moral knowledge follows the same principle of consistency that theoretical knowledge follows. **Reath[[1]](#footnote--1)**:

A formal principle of a domain of cognition grows out of and expresses the self-understanding of that activity. It would appear that **any kind of rational activity understands itself as having certain features that make it what it is** – indeed that it is a formal feature of rational activities that they understand themselves to have a certain form – and that all genuine instances of the activity are normatively guided by this self-understanding. (Rational activity is self-conscious and is guided by its awareness of what it is.) The spontaneity of cognition or rational activity, in part, is that it is normatively guided by this self-understanding (of its own form). In order to make this idea a bit less abstract, let me illustrate with an example taken from Stephen Engstrom (much simplified). Engstrom suggests that it is the mark of judgment that it is ‘self-consciously self-sustaining’. The self-sustaining component is that **a judgment understands itself to make an objectively valid claim that excludes incompatible claims** and that agrees with all other judgments and is confirmed by this agreement. **Judgment** is self-consciously self-sustaining because it **sustains itself through its understanding that it is making an objectively valid claim.** Among other things, it means that **judgment** self-consciously **seeks agreement with all other judgments as its formal aim,** both what Engstrom calls ‘subjective agreement’ and ‘objective agreement’. ‘Subjective agreement’ is that all judging subjects are to agree with or hold a valid judgment, and ‘objective agreement’ is that judgments with different content are to agree with and supporkt each other. **Thus** the formal feature of **judgment** is that it understands itself, and so **constitutively aims**, **to fit together with all other judgments in a single** (mutually supporting) **body of knowledge that holds for all** judging **subjects**, and moreover that it sustains itself through its consciousness that it does fit together with all other judgments in this way. In the case of theoretical judgments of the understanding, since the categories and principles of the understanding are conditions of agreement or unity in a single objective self-consciousness, they serve as the internal norms of judgment. The structure here is that a judgment – in this case a theoretical judgment – understands itself to be making an objectively [a] valid claim that stands with all other judgments in one body of knowledge. **This is a necessary feature of judgment, in that a mental state that does not understand itself in this way is not a judgment.** Further, this self-understanding leads to a set of internal principles that govern exercises of judgment in two respects. First, these internal principles describe and constitutively guide the operation of theoretical judgment and, because they are part of its self-understanding, tacitly guide all instances, even false judgments. One judges about items given in intuition (brings them to the objective unity of self-consciousness by bringing them under the categories and principles of the understanding. Second, these internal principles function as regulative norms that, again because they are based in the self-understanding of judgment, set authoritative standards of success and failure. A judgment that does not meet the condition of agreement with all other judgments must be withdrawn

Therefore, in order for an action to be moral it cannot contradict itself according to reason. If something does not form a reasonable contradiction it is moral. Morality entails non- contradictory judgments, meaning the standard is rejecting contradictory maxims.

I contend that affirming violates the standard. Two warrants:

#### 1) A living wage is coercive because it restricts the free actions of people. Marshall Thompson argues:

To use your money that way would use you as a means to my end (in the sense of an end I chose rather than one you chose). Your resources stem (to some degree) from your labor, and thus to take your labor and use it for another purpose against your will is unethical. For instance, we don’t think slavery would have been OK, if slave owners only used there slaves to provide disaster relief to people in need. Slavery is bad simply because it economizes someone else for purposes they did not set. You restrict their freedom to do as they will. Now, that is exactly what the government is doing when it gets involved in the economy. It is saying ‘you may not enter into contract X’ and thus restricts the freedom of individuals. Why should the government be allowed to do that anymore than I can? The libertarian argues that if it would be wrong for me to stipulate what contracts you can enter into, it is also wrong for the government to do so as well.

#### 2) The government’s determining a living wage is coercive in itself. Thompson 2

A second potential set of negative cases can stem from the idea that the government really should not be defining the idea of a ‘living wage.’ It is not clear that the government should dictate ‘this is how much money you need to flourish or live a good life.’ An individual may want to make very little money as an act of service, or to inculcate humility. They may be an epicurean or a stoic and not think they should have resources above a certain base level. Additionally, the living wage is often defined based on what is needed to care for a certain family structure. Why though, should the government dictate which living structures should and should not be supported? These sorts of NCs could appeal to a wide range of frameworks. One could argue that a living wage does a form of ethical violence through totalization (appealing to a set of Levinician principles). One could also claim that defining these conditions is overly paternalistic on the part of the government and so is a detriment to certain forms of human liberty.

1. Andrews Reath, “Formal Approaches to Kant’s Formula of Humanity,” 2009 (To appear in Sorin Baiasu and Mark Timmons, eds, *Kant on Practical Justification: Interpretive Essays* (Oxford University Press) [↑](#footnote-ref--1)